

Chapter 1: WHO DECIDES?

The Central Issue

The sometimes true story about the architects and planners who preserve some of the slums that are cleared to make way for their schemes, in order to have somewhere pleasant to live themselves, has a moral which is the theme of this working paper. The recent publication of an issue of the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* with the word CRISIS in red letters the height of its black cover, and the decision of homeless working-class families to take over a vacant block of Council flats in the East End of London, are typical indicators of the simultaneous loss of confidence in the ways we have been building by those who decide and enough to be forgotten by most of us most of the time. As the traditional words put it: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It is a shock to think that this might apply to all of us all of the time, even when we are acting as officially certified experts on other people's problems. But now that architects and planners as well as the other professions are confronted with a rapidly rising consciousness of their incompetence to decide for others what is best for them, as well as the generally unpopular nature of what they design, the now rather stale joke rarely fails to provoke a nervous laugh.

Who decides what for whom is the central issue of this and other chapters to follow on housing and human settlement. It is an issue that is shared with a large and rapidly growing proportion of all who supply and receive centrally administered social services. The occasionally literal collapse and the increasingly frequent demolition of recently built public housing in highly institutionalized countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, is paralleled by equally accelerating crises in the school systems and the health services. It is wrong to suppose that the revolt is by the dissatisfied users alone, as the RIBA report shows; those who earn their living as experts are among the most articulate critics.

No one denies the universal need for homes any more than the importance of learning or keeping in good health. But many have come to identify these ends with the ways and means that turn them into products. Housing has commonly come to mean the current stock of dwelling units and the capability of large building and management organizations to provide more. Learning is now commonly understood to be synonymous with education and this, in turn, with schooling and even with the institutions that award certificates. In the same way, good health has become bound to health services, and these in turn to hospitals. And so it goes for all

everyday needs and for what must also be everyday activities if they are to be properly satisfied. The alienation of everyday life by organizations that reify activities and institutionalize their values deprives the vast majority of us, as Edward Sapir wrote: 'of any but an insignificant and culturally abortive share in the satisfaction of the immediate wants of mankind, so that we are further deprived of both opportunity and stimulation to share in the production of new utilitarian values. Part of the time we are drayhorses; the rest of the time we are listless consumers of goods which have received no least impress of our personality' [Edward Sapir, *Culture, Genuine and Spurious* in Edward Sapir, *Culture, Language and Personality, Selected Essays*, ed. by David G. Mandelbaum, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1954].

The issue of who decides and who does what for whom, is a question of *how* we house ourselves, *how* we learn, *how* we keep healthy. This discussion can only take place between those who can separate the ways and means from the ends, and who are therefore able to question the commercialized or institutionalized values of modern societies.

The chapters that follow are about two sets of ways and means - the ways and means of centrally administrated systems, and those of self-governing, local systems. These ways and means generate very different immediate ends, which are the things that concern us in the first place.

Richard Barnet and Ronald Muller ask the key question: 'Can we organize the planet through centralizing technologies into ever-larger pyramidal structures?' [Richard J. Barnet and Ronald E. Muller, *Global Reach: The Power of the;Multinational Corporations*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1974] If the environments resulting from such systems are an indication of the results they produce in other spheres of life, then the answer is 'No'. Only a rich minority can be supplied in these centrally administered ways using centralizing technologies, and then only at the expense of an impoverished majority and the rapid exhaustion or poisoning of the planet's resources. This 'supreme political issue of our time', as Barnet and Muller rightly call it, is the choice between heteronomy (other-determined) and autonomy (self-determined) in personal and local matters.

While it may be ridiculous to imagine a well-populated world without world-wide organizations and authorities - without which telecommunication, for example, could hardly exist - it is absurd to think of a World Housing Authority centralizing humanity's supply of dwelling units. Where the absurd is a partial reality as in the internationalization of agriculture, the danger of disastrous commodity shortages has never been so great or imminent. In historical fact, good housing like plentiful food, is more common where it is locally produced through network structures and

decentralizing technologies. *The thesis in this book is that these are the only ways and means through which satisfactory goods and services can be obtained, and that they are vital for a stable planet.*

The mirage of development

When told in a Third World context, the story of the slum conserving architects is even more relevant to our theme. An English friend, working on a job in the Middle East, told me how a firm of consultants carefully conserved, for their own use, a few buildings in the old town which they had been employed to 'redevelop'. The traditional, thick-walled courtyard houses and narrow streets provided maximum shade and natural air-conditioning. This was very sensible in view of the high costs and breakdown risks of building and living in mechanically conditioned glass and concrete structures in very hot climates. In this case, and in many countries that have only recently achieved political independence, there was no question of social upgrading. The original upper-class owners and residents had already moved out of their dense, shaded and inward-looking traditional neighbourhoods into exposed, western-style suburbs as fast as they could get their imported consultants to design and direct their construction. Unfortunately for the consultants themselves, their exceedingly hospitable Arab clients would not return to their previous homes, even to visit their guest employees. Communication between professional and client was therefore greatly reduced, though not quite as much, perhaps, as it is between the planners and designers of most modern housing developments, and those who have to live in, pay and care for them.

When reflecting on the horrors of our own urban-industrial world, or on the even more nightmarish consequences of managerial post-industrialism, we must remember that the mirage-like reflections seen by the great majority of the world's population do in fact provide glimpses of a vastly higher material standard of living. I was sharply reminded of this recently when talking to the mayor of a small, rural Middle-Eastern town who had taken a planning course in Europe and was familiar with his European wife's redeveloped home town. He was - and is - determined to turn his district of scattered peasant villages into a tourist-based city as close as possible to the alienating models we are trying to get rid of. When such clients have large sums of unstable foreign currency to spend, there are lots of opportunities for the unscrupulous (on both sides, of course). The government of this particular country has committed itself to the purchase of pre-fabricated building systems - the most uneconomic, socially dysfunctional, and materially unstable constructions ever devised.

This truly destructive mirage will fade only as the producers and users abandon the distant original models, and as those that thirst after it see how small the pool of that kind of wealth is in relation to the immense numbers crawling towards it.

There are, of course, other reasons why those disillusioned with their own ways, and trying to withdraw from their addictions, should put their own house in order before preaching to those looking forward to, or even experiencing their first intoxication. As the already considerable literature on world economy of the past ten years or so proves to all but the most entrenched or naive reactionaries, the growth of urban-industrialism is not a linear process in which the still poor will take off in the wake of their wealthy and benign tutors. It should now be clear to anyone that follows current world affairs, let alone those that study specific aspects of change in the world today, that there are but three alternative futures.

Firstly, if current rates of consumption and pollution continue, the biosphere is likely to become incapable of supporting higher forms of life long before mineral resources are exhausted. The more people who join the feast of modern consumption, the sooner this will happen. The protests against the Club of Rome's first *Limits to Growth* report, boiled down to the quite reasonable conclusion that it is absurd to make such projections as there are multiple feed-backs in the over-all system (which Meadows et al grossly oversimplified), which will surely make corrections.

The kind of corrections most representatives of rich nations suggest provides the second alternative in which the rich level off their growth - but at a very high level and, implicitly, at the expense of the majority for whom there is no room at the feast and who must be kept at a much lower level to supply the others.

The third and only alternative that is both just and secure, is for the affluent society of wastemakers to reduce their levels of consumption to that which is safe for all to share. We have no right whatsoever to tell others to tighten their belts while our own bellies protrude so much that we cannot see the poverty we stand on.

It is a dismaying prospect - and a politically naive one - if it is assumed that we are fully dependent on pyramidal structures and centralizing technologies. If that were the case, the politically inconceivable but only route to survival would be a vast rationing scheme, administered by world agencies, for food, clothing, housing and all other essential services

It is a stimulating and hopeful prospect, on the other hand, if the opposite position is taken on the supreme political issue. If the possibilities of self-governing network structures and decentralizing technologies are realized - that is, those which do not demand highly centralized production, distribution, or servicing systems - and if the intrinsically oppressive wastefulness of heteronomous structures is also generally recognized, then those concerned with the future will take whatever action they

can in order to become independent of destructively centralist organizations and thus they will institute an alternative and viable world order.

Autonomy and heteronomy

The partially unsolved problem is to identify the practical and necessary limits to heteronomy and its opposite, autonomy. In this and following chapters it is argued that housing and, by implication, all other personal and locally specific services, must be autonomous. It is also argued that this autonomy is far from absolute - for it depends on access to essential resources. In housing, for instance, local autonomy and direct or indirect dweller-control depend on the availability of appropriate tools and materials (or technology), of land and finance. In general, the accessibility of these basic resources is a function of law and its administration, and these, in turn are functions of central authority

Thus we return to the traditional questions of human institutions and authority. But liberated from the distortions introduced by false expectation of mass-produced personal services, and with a vastly greater range of lightweight, low-powered, potentially decentralizing technologies the possibilities of effective action by local groups and associations, and of rapid general change, are vast and immediate. In relatively open societies such as those of Western Europe and North America this point is illustrated by the telephone.

Although most students and professional architects and planners dutifully visit their masters' and each other's works, few choose to live in them. Even those who can afford to do so seem to prefer places that were built by master craftsmen, artisans or ordinary folk, according to local rules and customs. How many admirers of Brasilia (Fig. 1), for example, stay there longer than necessary to see the principal buildings and, perhaps, one of the super-blocks? And how many designers of such places, prefer to spend their holidays in places like Mykonos,? The escalating prices of the diminishing supply of 'architecture without architects' limits its use to those with money. And this, in the urban-industrial world, largely limits the buyers, and even transient visitors, to those that serve the organizations that inhibit and destroy what they seek with their earnings

The more aware we become of the social costs of massive housing schemes, and of high-rise buildings, for those that cannot move about at will - the very young, the very old, and unassisted housewives - the greater are the efforts to counter the administrative and economic limitations imposed by sponsors and producers. The very wealthy can effectively demand costly simulations of traditional forms, while relatively wealthy governments can often be persuaded by their advisers to balance social against additional material costs). More recently, and in response to more

perceptive analyses of the social psychology of alienation, as well as to direct pressures from local groups of angry voters, citizen participation has even been built into planning and building law, as in Britain; or as a prerequisite for Federal support, as in the United States. Like the variety and smallness the wealthy seek, participation also costs more when it has to be built into central agencies' programmes. The desirability of small scale, variety, and participation in highly institutionalized contexts, is not at issue. The great majority of policy-makers and administrators, planners, architects, and laymen, when they are informed, agree that it is only a problem of cost and productivity.

Few, however, yet raise the *issue* of the feasibility of human scale, variety, and participation or responsibility in housing and human settlement. In the view of those that take the modern system for granted, the matter rests on a mis-stated *problem* of streamlining and acceleration or of altering priorities so as to get more money from the budget.

Many of those who mistakenly suppose that the problem of housing in rich countries is lack of money or the slow pace of existing production machinery, would really like to see uniform housing estates segregating categories of people, maybe muted by the current fashion for community participation and the personalization of consumer goods and services. The more perceptive are undoubtedly comforted by the knowledge that these cost money and are therefore unlikely to survive in an inflationary world. The real test of who stands where on the real issues comes when consumers break out of their institutionalized roles, and become producers and administrators. Then the emotional disturbance of those who fear freedom surfaces at once.

Those who deny that 'the only freedom of the slightest importance is the freedom to change one's commitments' and one's roles, are denying the greatest gain made since the Middle Ages. Ironically, the combination of a feudal attitude to social classes with the institutionalization of personal services actually reduces existential freedom - especially in the sphere of everyday activity. The rich of the modern world have made immense gains in social and geographic mobility and they consume enormous quantities of matter. But this has only been achieved thanks to the division of labour and the segregation of classes on a massive world-wide scale, and to the abandonment of local and personal control over the way we feed, clothe and house ourselves.

Paternalism and filialism, the modern descendants of attitudes more generally associated by Europeans with the Middle Ages, are still very common attitudes in Britain. These are especially evident in the common assumption that the 'ordinary' citizen or 'layman', is utterly dependent on the 'extraordinary' citizen or the

'professional', who cultivates the mystery of his or her activity in order to increase dependency and professional fees. However, citizens are at last getting wise in rapidly increasing numbers. This has been encouraged by the radicalization and incipient deprofessionalization of the institutionally 'closed shops'. Personal capability is at last resurfacing after the urban-industrial flood.

The most dramatic proof is in the 'upper-lower income countries' of the Third World, such as Greece and Turkey, or Chile and Peru. Examples of what non-professionals can achieve for themselves, are doing much to awaken their wealthy exploiters to the issues discussed here. For some of those in power, this has been a very rude awakening. A friend and an acquaintance of mine were visiting the vast *urbanizaciones popu/ares* of Arequipa Peru, some time in the mid-1950s. Hernan Bedoya, then director of the regional branch of the national urban planning office (ONPU), was showing the rapidly self-improving squatter settlements to Pedro Beltran, then owner and editor of *La Prensa*, a major national newspaper, and president of the newly formed commission for housing and agricultural reform (and later Minister of Finance and Prime Minister). Almost every plot around them was a building site with permanent structures of white tufa stone, or brick and concrete under construction; and the area they were visiting was already about five kilometres wide and two deep. Beltran saw a vast shanty town, instead of a huge construction site. Bedoya was speechless when Beltran went on to speak of his determination to rid these poor people of their dreadful slums which were in fact their pride and joy. This incident was echoed when in 1964, on days closely following one another, I took a visiting British Minister of State and a visiting colleague experienced in community development in Africa, to similar settlements in Lima. Both were profoundly impressed - but in opposite ways. The minister was depressed, the community worker delighted.

It is easy to anticipate how wealthy observers feel when confronted with such overwhelming demonstrations of local actions from which they cannot insulate themselves with misplaced pity.

Very deep changes of attitude have to take place before traditional politicians and 'unreconstructed' professionals can really serve ordinary people as they pretend. This was demonstrated in a remarkable dialogue between representatives of *Nueva Habana* - the well-known Chilean *campamento* shown in the film of that name- and an official of the Allende government. In this perhaps typical case of a people attempting to revolutionize the power structure and change the role of government, the well-meaning administrator was unable to imagine that the people could teach their own children, and that all he had to do was to authorize them and provide a few resources - at a vastly lower cost per child than the system which the bureaucrat was hopelessly locked into. The only bureaucratically conceivable role of

government is the administration of services to dependent and implicitly ignorant and incapable beneficiaries. And, as the Chileans and Peruvians have done, 'ordinary people' - that is, all of us as citizens - have to slough off the vestiges of cap-touching filialism and demand that those in power help us do what we can do locally for ourselves - by guaranteeing our access to fair shares of available resources - and where essential, by providing complementary infrastructure that cannot be installed locally and that can be provided for all.

Networks and hierarchies

The popularity of the book *Architecture without Architects* and the success of the exhibition it was taken from only demonstrate architects' common preference for architecture that has not been designed by architects. And it is confirmation of the thesis that culture literally comes from the cultivation of the soil. Le Corbusier's notebooks are full of sketches of traditional Mediterranean buildings. Although many architects do make sketches as Le Corbusier did and many planners believe with Doxiadis that genuine culture is a process of refinement from the grass-roots up, it is difficult to act on these intuitions or convictions and make even a modest living as an architect.

Although the professional mystification of everyday activities and the related specialized skills are blameworthy, professionals tend to over-blame themselves. It is inverted presumption for them to assume responsibilities that pertain to those that employ them, and to society as a whole. Excessive self-recrimination can paralyze the power to act.

At best, the remorseful activist will abandon the field in which he has most potential power and influence in order to 'change the system' on the false assumption that the system is something apart from the process of building. This, in turn, implies that the supply of buildings, of houses for example, is a function and dependent variable of a political superstructure. The autonomously developed settlements of Lima and Arequipa show that this is something less than a half-truth, whether considered politically or as an incipient language or culture of building. The contemporary if fragile dynamism of the awakening people of countries like Chile and Peru, in the shape of its building as well as of its political action, is what attracts so many who would be literal 'architects', and who seize opportunities as long as they haven't paralyzed themselves with guilt or ambition for wealth.

The reason it is so difficult to earn a living as a would-be grass-roots architect is that the only employers (or 'clients' as they are euphemistically called) are large organizations and a very small and rapidly diminishing number of wealthy individuals. And it is the former who cut off the specialist from the people he or she

wishes to serve, while the latter are irrelevant except, perhaps, for providing opportunities to experiment

Where local groups and associations of ordinary citizens have formed to act for themselves - such as the *Asociaciones de Padres de Familia Pro-Vivienda* in Peru, or even self-build housing associations in Britain - they are either unaware of the good intentions and potential contributions of planners and architects, or distrustful, or scared off by the fees which their professional associations oblige the architects to charge. So, in almost all countries, the great majority of professionals, in this and most other fields, are tied to centrally administered systems.

The number of professionals large organizations employ is naturally limited and, when they are 'efficient', it is a relatively small number in proportion to the population. And on top of this, the number of professionals who have secure jobs and who are also responsible and creative, tends to be even smaller. In the longer view, this is an alarming prospect and a morally depressing one. Future livelihoods, as well as the freedom to live responsibly and work creatively, are at stake.

To clarify the differences between an institutionalized and a would-be grass roots professional, the decision-making structures in each system must be understood.

The simplest way of doing this in housing is to divide the process of decision-making into three easily recognizable sets of operations:

- planning, or operations that generally precede construction
- construction or building operations,
- the management and maintenance of what is built, necessarily following the greater part of the building operations.

These sets of operations should be distributed between the three common sets of actors that is, those persons, groups, enterprises, or institutions that control the resources for the process itself;

- the users,
- the suppliers,
- the regulators.

For simplicity and brevity, I will distort the model a little by matching these three functional sets of actors with three sectors:













- the popular sector, the users,
- the private commercial sector, the suppliers,
- the public sector or government, the regulators.

By and large in the so-called free market and in mixed economies, these three sectors are clearly distinguishable, even though the former two are almost always

treated as a homogenous whole. This convention for seeing the users and the commercial suppliers as one and the same thing - the private sector - is too violent a distortion of the way things actually work. The motives and values of private users, and small producers, are substantially different from most commercial producers or suppliers in a modern society.

Large commercial organizations, or 'growth enterprises' exist to maximize financial returns for third parties, or to perpetuate or expand the organization itself, or all three. Though profitability is often a major factor in individual householders' or house-seekers' behaviour, use-values generally predominate - just as most small businesses are maintained for the livelihood of those that run them rather than for investors or for the sake of the enterprise as an institution. The public sector, or public agencies, on the other hand, are motivated primarily by the broad political purpose of maintaining their authority over the public order - even though this can be distorted by commercial motives.

The patterns of decision and control describing the two opposite systems are mirror images of one another, as their diagrammatic representation shows. (Figs. 8, 9).

<u>Plan</u>	<u>Construct</u>	<u>Manage</u>		<u>Plan</u>	<u>Construct</u>	<u>Manage</u>
			Regulators or Public Sector			
			Suppliers or Private (commercial) Sector			
			Users or Popular Sector			
<u>Locally self-governing or autonomous housing systems</u>				<u>Centrally administered or heteronomous housing systems</u>		

The organizations represented by these two patterns are totally different. When both normative or rule-making and operational or gameplaying powers are centralized, decisions flow from a peak of authority down through divisions of labour at successive levels to the base. There, whatever is left of the resources funnelled through the system are supplied as categorical goods or services; that is, categories of institutionally designed products are made available to institutionally defined categories of consumers. But when rule-making and game-playing decisions

are separated (along with an umpire to complete the democratic principle of separate legislative, executive and judicial powers), an entirely different structure emerges: a non-hierarchic network of autonomous, or semiautonomous decision-makers, free to combine as they will, as long as they stay within limits set by the rules.

The rules of such democratic games must act as *limits* to action, rather than as prescribed *lines* of action. Those unfamiliar with the vital difference between proscriptive law ('Thou shalt nots') and prescriptive law ('Thou shalts'), and who wrongly suppose that proscriptions limit freedom, should consider the difference between moving between any two positions along railway lines in a marshalling yard which must be followed and between any two positions along streets in a city which are defined by boundaries which may not be crossed.

This exercise illustrates the principles of equifinality and requisite variety which are essential to freedom and genuine culture, and without which peoples' needs can never be satisfied. Equifinality - a word that has not even made the OED *Supplement* - is the systems-term for the multiplicity of routes to the same end. It emphasizes the often forgotten interdependent variability of ways, means and ends.

To continue the analogy of the railway lines and streets, the former can be used with only one type of vehicle - trains. The latter, on the other hand, can be used by pedestrians, riders of animals, human or animal drawn vehicles, motor vehicles, or bicycles. There are a very limited number of stations in the railway system, but the street user can stop anywhere without blocking the way for others - as long as his vehicle isn't too big in proportion to the traffic flow. And, of course, the number of routes and combinations of routes and vehicles between any two points in each system varies from one in the authoritarian line system to a very large number indeed in the democratic limit system

The significance of these facts is stated by Ashby's Principle of Requisite Variety: If stability (of a system) is to be attained, the variety of the controlling system must be at least as great as the variety of the system to be controlled¹⁰. [W. R. Ashby, Self-regulation and Requisite Variety, chapter 11 of introduction to Cybernetics, Wiley, 1956, reprinted in Systems Thinking, ed. by F E. Emery, Penguin Modern Management Readings, London, 1969]. In housing, this implies that there must be as large a number of decision-makers, or controllers, as variations demanded for the maintenance of a stable housing system. The coincidence of extreme instability in modern housing systems, and their rigidly hierarchic nature, supports this proposition. In Britain, for example, there is a polarization of two dominant systems - the public sector and the private commercial sector. To an increasing extent both

are controlled by 'ever-larger pyramidal structures', by a rapidly decreasing number of 'local' authorities in the public sector, and speculative developers in the private, commercial sector. This has already resulted in grossly coarse-grained cities which exclude those who fail to fit the officially or commercially specified categories. The inevitable consequences have been gross misfits and mismatches, and a growing proportion of homelessness.

The high and inevitably spiralling costs of hierarchic systems (as will be explained later) have created a disproportionate dependency on borrowed capital. The result of this has been that the servicing of most homes exceeds the reasonable limits of what most occupiers can pay - and, collectively, the limit of what government can afford from national income without upsetting the economy as a whole. (According to recent estimates, British public housing tenants pay 40 per cent of the average costs - and nearly one third of all dwellings in Britain are publicly owned). In planned and market economies alike, these hierarchic systems are collapsing financially, sometimes socially, and even physically.

Systems generated or maintained by network structures, on the other hand, flourish. They only lose their stability and die as a result of actions or inactions by hierarchic structures whose interests are threatened.

Chapter 6: PRINCIPLES FOR HOUSING

The resolution of issues

The last three chapters discussed the basic issues and problems of dwelling environments. The remaining chapters will discuss the principles and practices that follow from the positions taken, and a programme for action.

The three principles to be discussed are suggested by the resolutions of the issues of value in housing, of housing economies, and of authority in housing

The conclusion - that what matters in housing is what it *does* for people rather than what it *is* - leads to *the principle of se/f-government in housing*. Only when housing is determined by households and local institutions and the enterprises that they control, can the requisite variety in dwelling environments be achieved. Only then can supply and demand be properly matched and consequently satisfied. And only then will people invest their own relatively plentiful and generally renewable resources.

The next conclusion that the economy of housing is a matter of personal and local resourcefulness rather than centrally controlled, industrial productivity - leads to *the principle of appropriate technologies for housing*. Only if the mechanical and managerial tools available are used by people and small organizations can locally accessible resources be effectively used.

The third conclusion that people in their own localities have ultimate authority over housing, as investment and care depend on resources that only they can use economically, leads to *the principle of planning for housing through limits*. Only if there are centrally guaranteed limits to private action can equitable access to resources be maintained and exploitation avoided. As long as planning is confused with design and lays down lines that people and organizations must follow, enterprise will be inhibited, resources will be lost, and only the rich will benefit.

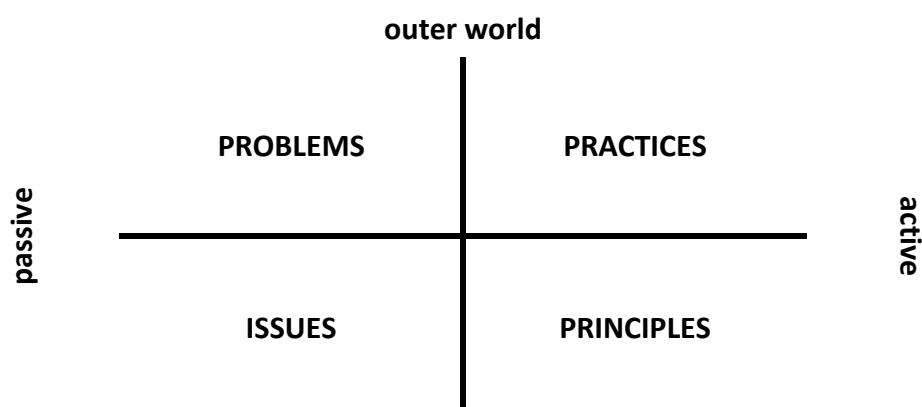
Elements of action

Practical activity and effective action is what we and existence are all about. As well as being stimulated by them, actions lead to problems. And problems raise issues. Issues, in turn, indicate principles for action, while principles determine the resolution of issues. And finally, principles are guides for practice as well as being generated by it. These elements in the development of a process for action must be

fully recognized for any coherent discussion of social, institutional and environmental change. The Geddesian square provides the conceptual frame of reference: (Fig. 28). It is symptomatic of pseudo-science that issues and principles are either denied or confused with problems and practices.

Fig. 28. *Four Elements of Action*.. Following Patrick Geddes' interpretation of the classic and universal differentiation of inner and outer realities, and of active and passive modes of being, essential differences and complementarities of the elements of action are clarified. The most common confusions today are between general issues and particular problems, and between general principles and particular practices. When treated synonymously, issues and problems lead to useless generalizations or blindness to others' experience. When principle is confused with practice, action is locked into rigid programmes or it becomes incoherently empirical.

Paffard Keating Clay and John F. C. Turner, *The Geddes Diagrams: Their Contribution Towards a Synthetic Form of Thought*, in: Patrick Geddes, 2nd ed. 1949, op. cit. Ch. 2.



Failure to understand and act on the essential differences between issues and problems, and between principles and practices exacerbate the three common abuses diagnosed in this chapter.

The principle of self-government in housing

First, there is the failure to separate personal and local activities and their immediate ends from those that are necessarily standardized at supra-local levels. Examples of these two extremes are houses and cars. People's homes are unique by definition - although a house is a relatively simple assembly, it has an immensely complex and variable set of uses. Motor cars, on the other hand, are relatively complex machines but they are necessarily designed for very simple uses - transportation. It is proving as disastrous to build and manage houses in ways that impose standardized housing types and life-styles, as it would be to fail to impose rules for driving powerful (and necessarily standardized) machines at high speeds in public places.

The principle of appropriate technologies of housing

The second failure discussed in this chapter is the confusion between centrally administered systems and self-governing ones, and the consequences of the domination of the former as the preferred modern means for achieving all immediate ends. Corporate organizations and the generally heavy and centralizing technologies they use have totally different capabilities from local and autonomous organizations, which generally use light and decentralizing technologies. While there may be arguments in favour of the small-scale production of high quality motor cars, it seems unlikely that this could compete with the mass-production that so successfully replaced it. The mass production of housing, on the other hand, is intrinsically uneconomic as well as socially and ecologically destructive for the reasons given in the previous chapters.

The principle of planning for housing through limits

The third failure discussed is the confusion of essentially different ways of controlling organized activity. Actions may be controlled by obliging the actors to follow lines for procedures, or they may be controlled by setting the limits to what the actors may do on their own initiative and in their own ways. To continue with the example of homes and cars, it is obvious that car manufacturing should be highly standardized, and that car drivers must be obliged not only to keep to the roads, but also to the same side! Home-builders, managers, and users, on the other hand, will be unable to invest all their resources or get the full use-values from the end products unless they are free to use the resources available to them, in their own ways - that do not limit the freedom of others or harm future generations.

Packages and Parts

Consider the extremes between heteronomy and autonomy in air travel. Everyone experiences heteronomy whether they are aware of it or not. The user is clearly 'subject to the rule of another being or power', and most passengers are only too glad to be in the hands of a competent and authoritarian air crew.

Autonomy is equally obvious in its more extreme forms. Pedestrians have complete control over their legs and can virtually go where they please. Most instances, however, fall between these two extremes, as most decisions and controls governing particular activities are composites of heteronomy and autonomy. For instance, the motor car - where, although drivers are bound by certain heteronomously administered restraints (roads and traffic regulations) they exercise their autonomy in choosing where they wish to go, and by what route.

These same extremes, and shades between, exist in housing - as the case histories show. Modern public housing tenants have little control over where they live or what kinds of dwellings and local amenities they have, and no control at all over the design and construction of their homes, or even over the ways in which they are managed and maintained. Not only Robinson Crusoe but most peasants (all castaways in their own ways) decide and do all of these things for themselves, within the often narrow limits of what they can and are free to do, of course. Their autonomy is limited only by their control over resources.

One vital difference between autonomy and heteronomy in housing services is that network (autonomous) organizations make loose parts available, while hierarchic (heteronomous) systems supply packages.

Simon Nicholson's Theory of Loose Parts [Simon Nicholson, *The Theory of Loose Parts*, reprinted in *Landscape Architecture*, USA, October 1971; reprinted in *Bulletin on Environmental Education*, Town & Country Planning Association, London, April, 1972] reminds us that freedom to do things for ourselves and in our own ways depends on the availability of a limited number of components that can be assembled in a maximum number of different ways. One must also remember that the returns on an increasing number of parts diminishes very rapidly. In most cases we need only a very few with which to do an immense range of variations. For example, consider the number of words, syntaxes and languages that can be written with a couple of dozen letters. Communication would be reduced, not increased, by a larger alphabet, since it would make reading more difficult to learn and thus reduce literacy.

Packaging is the most effective way of depriving people of control over their own lives and of alienating the products. Packaging, or the heteronomous packagers, achieve this in

two ways: by maximum processing they complicate the product and supply it in mysterious and opaque forms, often enclosed in shiny shells and booby-trapped. If they are not actually dangerous to tamper with, many typical modern products are virtually useless as soon as they go wrong; they are so expensive to repair that it is cheaper to throw them away and get another - to the great profit of the manufacturers and suppliers. Packaged foods are not very different: not only is one paying a high price for the containers, which often represent higher energy inputs than the energy outputs of their contents, but more and more processed foods are prepared for unique uses. Try using a cake mix for a different kind of cake!

Packaged housing is notoriously inflexible; it burns up a great deal more energy, and generally has a much shorter life than housing assembled by small builders from

combinations of local and imported materials and components in response to local demands.

These large-scale housing projects are burdened with a large administrative organization employing many professionals and highly paid administrators, as well as disproportionately large numbers of often very poorly paid but also non-productive white-collar workers. At the other extreme, customary and almost entirely self-governing squatter settlements, or the intermediate situation of the legal owner-builder or co-operative association, carry hardly any direct overheads at all.

While such extremes are more apparent in these lower income countries, the unbearable expense of centrally administered, package-housing services is also excessive in upper income countries.

The Cost of packaged housing

For people, the value of housing lies in what it does for them. It is not so much a function of what it looks like and what it is for the architects and builders, bankers and speculators and short-term politicians. Their view of rigid packaging of standardized housing types, management systems and residential areas prevents them from seeing use-values. The use-values of these large housing projects in all parts of the world are very low. So low, in fact, that most households' energies are concentrated on getting out instead of caring. Carelessness and vandalism are the hallmarks of modern mass housing.

The often well-intentioned policies based on mass housing are very costly ways of impoverishing people - first the poor and, in the longer run, society as a whole. In low and very low income economies, it is especially obvious that the demand for labour does not serve those who have the greatest needs, but those who have the greatest surplus. The greater people's margin of savings the greater their expenditure on products such as colour television sets which are not only of dubious existential value, but also provide far fewer opportunities for responsible and creative work, both for producers and for users.

The argument that the rich generate development by employing the poor does not bear close examination. Nor do the arguments that the rich feed the poor from the crumbs of their tables, or that they clothe and house them in their filtered-down cast-offs. The poor will only eat, clothe, and house themselves better if they are more fully employed and better paid. And this depends, as the analysis presented in this book has demonstrated, on the implementation of the three principles

described in this chapter - the third of which demands the differentiation and proper application of *executive* and *legislative* planning, which are the alternative ways of employing organizations for specific ends.

Executive or legislative planning

The differences between kinds of organization are critical. Their influence on planning can reinforce one against another in any particular sphere. The type of organization is clearly a major determinant of resources used, production systems, and the values of the goods and services produced.

Choosing the correct type of organization is the major planning problem, drawing the boundaries between the spheres of action by centrally administered and locally self-governing systems. More precisely, it is the problem of limiting the mix between these two systems so that one does not cripple the other.

The predominant way in which planning is carried out is what I call *executive* planning. This is planning by programmed specifications and procedures. This is often called 'urban design' and is deeply embedded in contemporary planning theory and practise. [3 In a letter quoted by N. Evenson in *Chandigarh*, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1966, an eminent architect wrote: 'Le Corbusier, Jeanneret and I are all architects heavily involved in town planning. Any architects worth their name in charge of building on these scales of this city must have strong ideas on planning as being undisputedly an extension of architecture.']

Unlike the sponsors of modern mass housing projects and their 'urban designers', King Edward II of England 'ordered' his new towns, as he put it, *before* the 'arrayment' of the urban 'accoutrements'. In more modern words, the planners got the people together before the town was built, and the latter were given a great deal more freedom to decide for themselves what to build. King Phillip II of Spain's highly successful town planning 'Law of the Indies' which regulated many colonial cities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was essentially similar. Both were much nearer to the planning and development procedures of the squatter settlement than to the housing project. As the principal purpose of the new towns was to earn revenue - in other words, to generate development - the kings minimized rather than maximized initial investment and concentrated on ensuring the maximum investment by their subjects. This was done, and often with considerable success, simply by setting out the *limits* of what they were free to do. This took the form of demarcated plots and guarantees of secure tenure. In return, the beneficiaries were obliged to invest to a minimum level within a given period, or forfeit their tenure.

This latter and more traditional kind of organization, where planning sets limits within which people and their enterprises may do as they will, I call *legislative* planning. The laws employed here are *pro*-scriptive rather than *pre*-scriptive - that is, they are norms and institutions that set limits to what people and local enterprises *may* do, rather lines which they *must* follow. Of course, there is no clear threshold between limits and lines - as limits get closer together they become lines - and some lines may be so faint that the follower has to find his own way.

This statement of the central problem of planning - of first differentiating between executive lines of action and legislative limits to action, and then drawing up those lines and, much more importantly, those limits - is a reminder of our own ignorance. One cannot place limits on some activity without understanding it. This uncomfortable truth is illustrated by the fact that the only area where substantial progress has been made towards limits for housing and building action is in construction. We know enough about the functional characteristics of materials to have performance standards for the design of *construction*. Performance standards set limits, as distinct from the old-fashioned specification standards which lay down the lines. Every architect appreciates the difference between being obliged by law to build load-bearing walls for houses to an 11-inch cavity wall specification, and being free to build a wall in any way he and his client please, as long as they can prove that it will carry the loads placed on it and provide the necessary degrees of insulation.

But we do not know enough, or we have not organized our knowledge well enough, to do the equivalent for the design of *space*, or for the design of its *management*, or for the design of building *economy*. This is natural enough given the immense disparity of knowledge between the natural sciences, as they used to be called, and the human sciences. In other words, without a theory of the built environment, we cannot write its laws. And if we cannot write its laws, we can only design and build in an *ad hoc* way - we cannot really plan at all.

This may be an exaggeration and if we rearranged the knowledge we already have, we could probably formulate practical performance standards for environmental design that would generate social and economic as well as physical harmony. To take one example which has excellent historical as well as contemporary precedents: the rule that both minimum *and* maximum construction standards must be proportionate to their life span. I am sure that neither King Edward II nor King Phillip II prohibited the construction of provisional shacks by their subjects while the latter were preparing to build their permanent homes. Sir Thomas More's description of house-building in *Utopia* certainly reflects sixteenth century procedures and it is an excellent description of what most squatter-builders aspire to, and a surprising number actually achieve:

Houses in the beginning were very low, and like homely cottages or poor shepherd houses, made at all adventures of every rude piece of timber that came first to hand, with mud walls, and ridged roofs, thatched over with straw. But now the houses be curiously builded after a gorgeous and gallant sort, with three stories one over another.

It goes without saying that few contemporary planning authorities would tolerate such untidy methods, in spite of the immense economies and social advantages. They prohibit progressive development which is dependent on the will of autonomously organized people and communities. And that is in conflict with the heteronomous control institutions maintain over them.

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